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C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 001451

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W  
STATE FOR INR/AA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/15/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NEW VIOLENCE FROM OLD DISPUTE IN OGONILAND

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for Reason 1.4 (D)

11. (SBU) Communal violence erupted in the Ogoniland region of Rivers State and claimed additional lives. Daily newspapers estimated the toll at 22 dead. Ledum Mitee, President of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), said in a September 8 meeting with Consular staff the actual number was five killed. Mitee also issued a statement calling for the violence to end.

12. (SBU) The violence was attributed to a dispute dating back to 2003. Two communities, Gbor-Kaani and Bua-Teyor Kaani, both in Khana Ward 6 of Rivers State, are in conflict over the ward's position in the local government council. There had been agreement for rotational occupancy of the position by one community and then the other. However, when time came for the prize to rotate to Bua-Teyor Kaani, the Gbor-Kaani incumbent refused to honor the arrangement. The incumbent has since passed away, leaving the position vacant. The dispute quickly escalated into violence.

13. (C) Comment: This procession from political agreement to communal violence reveals many of the idiosyncrasies of the Nigerian political culture. Although the deal rotating the occupancy of an elected position was extra-constitutional, it was also a pragmatic attempt to douse the embers between feuding communities. Sadly this attempt fell victim to another Nigerian political trait - the abrogation of an informal agreement by an incumbent more than reluctant to surrender the staff and rank of his office no matter how modest that office might be. This behavior, comprising some of the more troublesome tiles in the Nigerian political mosaic, unfortunately has and will continue to lead to an unhealthy number of political squabbles and sometimes brings with it unnecessary political violence as in the case of Ogoniland. End comment.

BROWNE